

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 090034

12

ORIGIN EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-06

SAM-01 OES-06 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 /092 R

DRAFTED BY EA/PHL;RTWILLNER;EM

APPROVED BY EA/PHL;BAFLECK

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R 141952Z APR 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MANILA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG:RP

SUBJECT: OIL EXPLORATION IN REED BANK AREA

REF: MANILA 5063

1. IN APRIL 13 CONVERSATION WITH VICE PRESIDENT FOR OPERATIONS STEPHENS OF BRINKERHOFF DRILLING COMPANY, DENVER, DEPTOFF NOTED REPORT THAT BRINKERHOFF WAS PLANNING TO DRILL IN REED BANK AREA; THAT THIS AREA WAS CLAIMED BY ROC, PRC, VIETNAMESE AND PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENTS. EXPLAINED USG TOOK NO POSITION ON VALIDITY OF RESPECTIVE CIMS BUT COULD NOT GUARANTEE PROTECTION IN DISPUTED AREA FOR US VESSELS OR PERSONNEL, AND WOULD QUESTION WISDOM OF US FIRMS OPERATING IN THAT AREA. NOTED USG COULD NOT PROHIBIT SUCH ACTIVITY BUT WANTED TO BE SURE THAT COMPANY UNDERSTOOD THE RISK.

2. STEPHENS SAID BRINKERHOFF HAD SIGNED CONTRACT ABOUT TEN
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PAGE 02 STATE 090034

DAYS AGO AND THEY WERE NOT SURE THEY COULD GET OUT OF IT.

HE SAID THEY DO NO PRODUCTION DRILLING, ONLY EXPLORATION. THEY HAD BEEN DRILLING IN PALAWAN AREA AND THOUGHT REED BANK SITE WAS ONLY SLIGHTLY FARTHER FROM PHILIPPINE LAND THAN SITES PREVIOUSLY EXPLORED.

3. DEPTOFF SAID IT HAD BEEN OUR UNDERSTANDING REED BANK WAS ABOUT 150 MILES FROM PALAWAN AND WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF PALAWAN TRENCH, WELL INTO DISPUTED AREA. SAID DEPARTMENT COULD CHECK AGAIN IF BRINKERHOFF COULD PROVIDE COORDINATES. STEPHENS SAID THESE WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE TO HIM.

4. STEPHENS SAID MOST OF WORKERS ON RIG WOULD BE FILIPINOS. DEPTOFF NOTED THEY WOULD BE RESPONSIBILITY OF PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT BUT THAT AMERICANS WOULD BE OF CONCERN TO USG.

5. STEPHENS ASKED IF USG HAD ANY INFORMATION ON POSSIBILITY OF SWEDISH UNDERSTANDING WITH OTHER CLAIMANTS TO THE AREA. DEPTOFF SAID WE HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF THIS.

6. STEPHENS ASKED IF USG WOULD NOT PROTECT AMERICAN VESSELS. DEPTOFF NOTED THAT AREA IN QUESTION DID NOT APPEAR TO BE HIGH SEAS. ASKED WHAT US WOULD DO IN CONFLICT BETWEEN PHILIPPINES AND VIETNAM, DEPTOFF NOTED WE HAVE DEFENSE TREATY WITH PHILIPPINES BUT DOUBTED IT WOULD APPLY TO AREA IN QUESTION.

7. STEPHENS SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS MATTER WITH MR. BRINKERHOFF AND BE IN TOUCH AGAIN.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: OFFSHORE DRILLING, PETROLEUM INDUSTRY
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE090034
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: PHL;RTWILLNER;EM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760142-0737
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760461/aaaabztb.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MANILA 5063
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <28 SEP 2004 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OIL EXPLORATION IN REED BANK AREA
TAGS: ENRG, RP, US, BRINKERHOFF DRILLING CO
To: MANILA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006